

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 COME-00
EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 OC-06 CCO-00 CU-04 IO-13
SY-05 SCA-01 DHA-02 ISO-00 /113 W
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R 251540Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
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INFO TREASURY DEPT, WASH DC
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
DIA
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO
OECD PARIS
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN, GERMANY
USODOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

UNCLAS ROME 4966

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, IT, EFIM
SUBJECT: ROME STRIKE IMPRESSIVE AND UNMARRED BY VIOLENCE

REF: ROME 4646

SUMMARY. MARCH 23 GENERAL STRIKE SHUT DOWN CITY ALMOST COMPLETELY, EXCEPT FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES. TURNOUT FOR CCU RALLY, EVER 100,000, WAS HEAVIEST IN RECENT MEMORY. DESPITE TENSION, NO VIOLENCE OCCURRED. STUDENT PARADE PAST AND DEMONSTRATION ADJACENT TO CCU RALLY MOCKED UNIONS', COMMUNISTS POLICE AND GOVERNMENT WITH SARCASTIC CHANTS AND STREET THEATER, BUT CAREFULLY UNCLASSIFIED

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AVOIDED VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. MARCH 23 ROME PORTION OF MARCH 18 NATIONAL STRIKE WAS UNUSUALLY EFFECTIVE. PARTICIPATION SEEMED VIRTUALLY TOTAL. FEAR OF VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION IN WAKE OF MARCH 12 STUDENT RIOTS WAS INTENSIFIED BY DEATH OF TWO POLICEMAN SHOT DURING CHASE AFTER TERRORIST FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE SPOTTED ON A ROME BUS

LATE ON MRCH 22. ROMANS THUS AVOIDED, AND REMOVED THEIR CARS, FROM THE CENTRAL CITY, OR REMAINED INDOORS, DURING MORNING OF MARCH 23, SO CITY SEEMED EVEN MORE DESERTED THAN AT HEIGHT OF AUGUST HOLIDAYS. SHOPS, BUSINESSES, COFFEE BARS, EVEN MOST RESTAURANTS, REMAINED CLOSED AND SHUTTERED IN RESPONSE TO RETAIL ASSOCIATION CALL TO PROTEST AGAINST VIOLENCE, AS WELL AS OUT OF FEAR OF VANDALISM.

3. CGIL-CISL-UIL (CCU) RALLY IN PIAZZA SAN GIOVANNI WAS MOST IMPRESSIVE IN SIZE SINCE TOGLIATTI'S FUNERAL IN 1964. OVER 100,000 TURNED OUT (SOME PRESS REPORTS MADE ESTIMATES AS HIGH AS 200,000 - MANY MORE THAN COULD HAVE FIT INTO SQUARE) TO LISTEN TO CCU SECGEN LAMA, MACARIO AND BENVENUTO. MASSIVE UNION "SERVICE OF ORDER" (4,000 STRONG) ARRIVED EARLY IN MORNING, ERECTED BARRICADES AND FORMED PHALANX FIVE ROWS DEEP CONTROLLING ENTRANCES TO SQUARE AND ACCESS TO PLATFORM. CROWD WAS ORDERLY, EVEN SOLEMN, APPLAUDING BUT NOT INTERRUPTING OR SHOUTING SLOGANS, EXCEPT TO COUNTER STUDENTS WHEN THEY MARCHED PAST.

4. "TO OVERCOME THE CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE, FOR CIVIL COEXISTENCE, FOR FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH, UNEMPLOYED AND WOMEN" WAS THE RALLY'S THEME. ALL THREE SPEAKERS SPOKE OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE. LAMA SINGLED OUT POLICE FOR PRAISE AND UNDERSTANDING FOR DEFENDING STRUCTURE OF DEMOCRACY AND VALUES WORKERS HAD FOUGHT TO OBTAIN, REFERRING TO POLICEMEN AS WORKERS AND BROTHERS. LAMA AND BENVENUTO BOTH ATTACKED INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) FOR UNDUE INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN AFFAIRS, BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IMF DID SO LARGELY AT GOI INSTIGATION. UNCLASSIFIED

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LAMA SINSINUATED THAT INTERNATIONAL LENDERS ALSO WANTED TO WEAKEN ITALY'S COMPETITIVITY IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND KEEP ITALY'S ECONOMY DISORGANIZED, FOR THEIR OWN NATIONS' BENEFIT. ALL THREE SPEAKERS STRESSED THE NEED FOR INVESTMENT IN THE SOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH. BENENUTO WAS THE MOST OUTSPOKEN IN CRITICISING THE GOVERNMENT AND EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR THE STUDENTS PLIGHT, BUT NOT FOR THEIR VIOLENCE.

5. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ONE-DAY DISPENSATION FROM ITS BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN ROME AFTER THE MARCH 12 RIOTS, ABOUT 20,000 MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT "MOVEMENT" MARCHED PAST THE OPEN SIDE OF PIAZZA SAN GIOVANNI AND ASSEMBLED FOR THEIR RALLY IN AN ADJACENT SQUARE. THE TONE OF THE DEMONSTRATION WAS SET NOT BY THE VIOLENCE-PRONE "AUTONOMIST" FACTIONS WHO WREAKED HAVOC IN ROME MARCH 12, BUT BY THE YPPPY-LIKE "METROPOLITAN INDIANS", WHO USE SATIRE AND RIDICULE TO TRY TO DESTROY ITALY'S PRESENT POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE. THEY FEEL THEY ARE LEFT TO ROT USELESSLY IN ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES, WITH NO HOPE OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OR

USEFULNESS, AND CONSIDER THIS ANALOGOUS TO THE SITUATION OF AMERICAN INDIANS ON RESERVATIONS. THEREFORE, THEY PAINT THEMSELVES, DANCE IN THE STREETS, IMITATE HOLLYWOOD INDIANS, READ "BURY MY HEART AT WOUNDED KNEE" AND OTHER AMERICAN INDIAN PROTEST BOOKS, AND ADOPT NAMES LIKE GERONIMO AND COCHISE. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THEY REJECT THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND UNIONS ALONG WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT AS PART OF THE "WHITE" ESTABLISHMENT, AND ARE PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE AT SATIRICALLY SKEWERING THE COMMUNISTS AND UNIONS WITH CLEVER SLOGANS. "SACRIFICES, SACRIFICES, THIS US LAMA" THEY CRIED, FALLING TO THEIR KNEES, AS THEY PASSED THE UNION DEMONSTRATION. "MORE WORK, LESS PAY"; "NOW, IT'S TIME, POVERTY FOR THE WORKINGMAN", WERE OTHER SLOGANS THEY CHANTED, DIDUCULING CCU MODERATION AND COOPERATIVE IN GOVERNMENT AUSTERITY EFFORTS, AND "GUI AND TANASSI ARE INNOCENT* WE'RE THE CRIMINALS*". WORKERS RESPONDED WITH FAVORITE "METROPOLITAN INDIAN" TACTICS, APPLAUDING THEM MOCKINGLY AND CHANTING "IDIOTS* IDIOTS*" ONCE IN THE ADJACENT SQUARE, UNCLASSIFIED

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THEY DANCED, CHANTED, HELD SMALL DEBATES, STAGED MOCK POLICE CHARGES AND BATTLED WITH WATER PISTOLS AND SPELLED OUT "IDIOTS" IN BLOCK LETTERS FOR THE POLICE HELICOPTERS OVERHEAD.

6. THE HEAVY POLICE COVERAGE STRATEGICALLY PLACED THROUGHOUT TOWN NEVER NEEDED TO BE USED. AFTER TWELVE, THE DEMONSTRATIONS DISSOLVED, OTHER ROMANS EMERGED, AND ALL ENJOYED THE SUN FLOWERS AND FNE SPRING WEATHER IN ROME'S STREETS, SQUARES AND PARKS, AS IF IT WERE SUNDAY. GARDNER

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Event:
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